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Modernity at Large

Cultural Dimensions of Globalization

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Here and Now

Modernity belongs to that small family of theories that both declares and desires universal applicability for itself. What is new about modernity (or about the idea that its newness is a new kind of newness) follows from this duality. Whatever else the project of the Enlightenment may have created, it aspired to create persons who would, after the fact, have wished to have become modern. This self-fulfilling and self-justifying idea has provoked many criticisms and much resistance, in both theory and everyday life.

In my own early life in Bombay, the experience of modernity was notably synaesthetic and largely pretheoretical. I saw and smelled modernity reading *Life* and American college catalogs at the United States Information Service library, seeing B-grade films (and some A-grade ones) from Hollywood at the Eros Theatre, five hundred yards from my apartment building. I begged my brother at Stanford (in the early 1960s) to bring me back blue jeans and smelled America in his Right Guard when he returned. I gradually lost the England that I had earlier imbibed in my Victorian schoolbooks, in rumors of Rhodes scholars from my college, and in Billy Bunter and Biggles books devoured indiscriminately with books by Richmal Crompton and Enid Blyton. Franny and Zooey, Holden Caulfield, and Rabbit Angstrom slowly eroded that part of me that had been, until then,

forever England. Such are the little defeats that explain how England lost the Empire in postcolonial Bombay.

I did not know then that I was drifting from one sort of postcolonial subjectivity (Anglophone diction, fantasies of debates in the Oxford Union, borrowed peeks at *Encounter*, a patrician interest in the humanities) to another: the harsher, sexier, more addictive New World of Humphrey Bogart reruns, Harold Robbins, *Time*, and social science, American-style. By the time I launched myself into the pleasures of cosmopolitanism in Elphinstone College, I was equipped with the Right Stuff—an Anglophone education, an upper-class Bombay address (although a middle-class family income), social connections to the big men and women of the college, a famous (now deceased) brother as an alumnus, a sister with beautiful girlfriends already in the college. But the American bug had bit me. I found myself launched on the journey that took me to Brandeis University (in 1967, when students were an unsettling ethnic category in the United States) and then on to the University of Chicago. In 1970, I was still drifting toward a rendezvous with American social science, area studies, and that triumphal form of modernization theory that was still a secure article of Americanism in a bipolar world.

The chapters that follow can be seen as an effort to make sense of a journey that began with modernity as embodied sensation in the movies in Bombay and ended face-to-face with modernity-as-theory in my social science classes at the University of Chicago in the early 1970s. In these chapters, I have sought to thematize certain cultural facts and use them to open up the relationship between modernization as fact and as theory.[1] This reversal of the process through which I experienced the modern might account for what might otherwise seem like an arbitrary disciplinary privileging of the cultural, a mere professional anthropological bias.

The Global Now

All major social forces have precursors, precedents, analogs, and sources in the past. It is these deep and multiple genealogies (see chap. 3) that have frustrated the aspirations of modernizers in very different societies to synchronize their historical watches. This book, too, argues for a general rupture in the tenor of intersocietal relations in the past few decades. This view of change—indeed, of rupture—needs to be explicated and distinguished from some earlier theories of radical transformation.

One of the most problematic legacies of grand Western social science

(Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, Ferdinand Toennies, Max Weber, Émile Durkheim) is that it has steadily reinforced the sense of some single moment—call it the modern moment—that by its appearance creates a dramatic and unprecedented break between past and present. Reincarnated as the break between tradition and modernity and typologized as the difference between ostensibly traditional and modern societies, this view has been shown repeatedly to distort the meanings of change and the politics of pastness. Yet the world in which we now live—in which modernity is decisively at large, irregularly self-conscious, and unevenly experienced—surely does involve a general break with all sorts of pasts. What sort of break is this, if it is not the one identified by modernization theory (and criticized in chap. 7)?

Implicit in this book is a theory of rupture that takes media and migration as its two major, and interconnected, diacritics and explores their joint effect on the *work of the imagination* as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity. The first step in this argument is that electronic media decisively change the wider field of mass media and other traditional media. This is not a monocausal fetishization of the electronic. Such media transform the field of mass mediation because they offer new resources and new disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds. This is a relational argument. Electronic media mark and reconstitute a much wider field, in which print mediation and other forms of oral, visual, and auditory mediation might continue to be important. Through such effects as the telescoping of news into audio-video bytes, through the tension between the public spaces of cinema and the more exclusive spaces of video watching, through the immediacy of their absorption into public discourse, and through their tendency to be associated with glamour, cosmopolitanism, and the new, electronic media (whether associated with the news, politics, family life, or spectacular entertainment) tend to interrogate, subvert, and transform other contextual literacies. In the chapters that follow, I track some ways in which electronic mediation transforms preexisting worlds of communication and conduct.

Electronic media give a new twist to the environment within which the modern and the global often appear as flip sides of the same coin. Always carrying the sense of distance between viewer and event, these media nevertheless compel the transformation of everyday discourse. At the same time, they are resources for experiments with self-making in all sorts of societies, for all sorts of persons. They allow scripts for possible lives to be imbricated with the glamour of film stars and fantastic film plots and yet also to be tied to the plausibility of news shows, documentaries, and other

black-and-white forms of telemediation and printed text. Because of the sheer multiplicity of the forms in which they appear (cinema, television, computers, and telephones) and because of the rapid way in which they move through daily life routines, electronic media provide resources for self-imagining as an everyday social project.

As with mediation, so with motion. The story of mass migrations (voluntary and forced) is hardly a new feature of human history. But when it is juxtaposed with the rapid flow of mass-mediated images, scripts, and sensations, we have a new order of instability in the production of modern subjectivities. As Turkish guest workers in Germany watch Turkish films in their German flats, as Koreans in Philadelphia watch the 1988 Olympics in Seoul through satellite feeds from Korea, and as Pakistani cabdrivers in Chicago listen to cassettes of sermons recorded in mosques in Pakistan or Iran, we see moving images meet deterritorialized viewers. These create diasporic public spheres, phenomena that confound theories that depend on the continued salience of the nation-state as the key arbiter of important social changes.

Thus, to put it summarily, electronic mediation and mass migration mark the world of the present not as technically new forces but as ones that seem to impel (and sometimes compel) the work of the imagination. Together, they create specific irregularities because both viewers and images are in simultaneous circulation. Neither images nor viewers fit into circuits or audiences that are easily bound within local, national, or regional spaces. Of course, many viewers may not themselves migrate. And many mass-mediated events are highly local in scope, as with cable television in some parts of the United States. But few important films, news broadcasts, or television spectacles are entirely unaffected by other media events that come from further afield. And few persons in the world today do not have a friend, relative, or coworker who is not on the road to somewhere else or already coming back home, bearing stories and possibilities. In this sense, both persons and images often meet unpredictably, outside the certainties of home and the cordon sanitaire of local and national media effects. This mobile and unforeseeable relationship between mass-mediated events and migratory audiences defines the core of the link between globalization and the modern. In the chapters that follow, I show that the work of the imagination, viewed in this context, is neither purely emancipatory nor entirely disciplined but is a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern.

The Work of the Imagination

Ever since Durkheim, and the work of the *Annees Sociologiques* group, anthropologists have learned to regard collective representations as social facts—that is, to see them as transcending individual volition, as weighted with the force of social morality, and as objective social realities. What I wish to suggest is that there has been a shift in recent decades, building on technological changes over the past century or so, in which the imagination has become a collective, social fact. This development, in turn, is the basis of the plurality of imagined worlds.

On the face of it, it seems absurd to suggest that there is anything new about the role of the imagination in the contemporary world. After all, we are now accustomed to thinking about all societies as having produced their versions of art, myth, and legend, expressions that implied the potential evanescence of ordinary social life. In these expressions, all societies showed that they could both transcend and reframe ordinary social life by recourse to mythologics of various kinds in which social life was imaginatively deformed. In dreams, finally, individuals even in the most simple societies have found the space to refigure their social lives, live out proscribed emotional states and sensations, and see things that have then spilled over into their sense of ordinary life. All these expressions, further, have been the basis of a complex dialogue between the imagination and ritual in many human societies, through which the force of ordinary social norms was somehow deepened, through inversion, irony, or the performative intensity and the collaborative work demanded by many kinds of ritual. All this is the surest sort of knowledge bequeathed to us by the best of canonical anthropology over the past century.

In suggesting that the imagination in the postelectronic world plays a newly significant role, I rest my case on three distinctions. First, the imagination has broken out of the special expressive space of art, myth, and ritual and has now become a part of the quotidian mental work of ordinary people in many societies. It has entered the logic of ordinary life from which it had largely been successfully sequestered. Of course, this has precedents in the great revolutions, cargo cults, and messianic movements of other times, in which forceful leaders implanted their visions into social life, thus creating powerful movements for social change. Now, however, it is no longer a matter of specially endowed (charismatic) individuals, injecting the imagination where it does not belong. Ordinary people have begun to deploy their imaginations in the practice of their everyday lives. This fact is exemplified in the mutual contextualizing of motion and mediation.

More people than ever before seem to imagine routinely the possibility that they or their children will live and work in places other than where they were born: this is the wellspring of the increased rates of migration at every level of social, national, and global life. Others are dragged into new settings, as the refugee camps of Thailand, Ethiopia, Tamil Nadu, and Palestine remind us. For these people, they move and must drag their imagination for new ways of living along with them. And then there are those who move in search of work, wealth, and opportunity often because their current circumstances are intolerable. Slightly transforming and extending Albert Hirschman's important terms *loyalty* and *exit*, we may speak of diasporas of hope, diasporas of terror, and diasporas of despair. But in every case, these diasporas bring the force of the imagination, as both memory and desire, into the lives of many ordinary people, into mythographies different from the disciplines of myth and ritual of the classic sort. The key difference here is that these new mythographies are charters for new social projects, and not just a counterpoint to the certainties of daily life. They move the glacial force of the habitus into the quickened beat of improvisation for large groups of people. Here the images, scripts, models, and narratives that come through mass mediation (in its realistic and fictional modes) make the difference between migration today and in the past. Those who wish to move, those who have moved, those who wish to return, and those who choose to stay rarely formulate their plans outside the sphere of radio and television, cassettes and videos, newsprint and telephone. For migrants, both the politics of adaptation to new environments and the stimulus to move or return are deeply affected by a mass-mediated imaginary that frequently transcends national space.

The second distinction is between imagination and fantasy. There is a large and respectable body of writing, notably by the critics of mass culture of the Frankfurt School and anticipated in the work of Max Weber, that views the modern world as growing into an iron cage and predicts that the imagination will be stunted by the forces of commoditization, industrial capitalism, and the generalized regimentation and secularization of the world. The modernization theorists of the past three decades (from Weber by way of Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils to Daniel Lerner, Alex Inkeles, and many others) largely accepted the view of the modern world as a space of shrinking religiosity (and greater scientism), less play (and increasingly regimented leisure), and inhibited spontaneity at every level. There are many strands in this view, strands that link theorists as different as Norbert Elias and Robert Bell, but there is something fundamentally wrong with it. The error works on two levels. First, it is based on a prema-

ture requiem for the death of religion and the victory of science. There is vast evidence in new religiosities of every sort that religion is not only not dead but that it may be more consequential than ever in today's highly mobile and interconnected global politics. On another level, it is wrong to assume that the electronic media are the opium of the masses. This view, which is only beginning to be corrected, is based on the notion that the mechanical arts of reproduction largely reprimed ordinary people for industrial work. It is far too simple.

There is growing evidence that the consumption of the mass media throughout the world often provokes resistance, irony, selectivity, and, in general, *agency*. Terrorists modeling themselves on Rambo-like figures (who have themselves generated a host of non-Western counterparts); housewives reading romances and soap operas as part of their efforts to construct their own lives; Muslim family gatherings listening to speeches by Islamic leaders on cassette tapes; domestic servants in South India taking packaged tours to Kashmir: these are all examples of the active way in which media are appropriated by people throughout the world. T-shirts, billboards, and graffiti as well as rap music, street dancing, and slum housing all show that the images of the media are quickly moved into local repertoires of irony, anger, humor, and resistance.

Nor is this just a matter of Third World people reacting to American media, but it is equally true of people throughout the world reacting to their own national, electronic media. On these grounds alone, the theory of media as the opium of the people needs to be looked at with great skepticism. This is not to suggest that consumers are *free* agents, living happily in a world of safe malls, free lunches, and quick fixes. As I suggest in chapter 4, consumption in the contemporary world is often a form of drudgery, part of the capitalist civilizing process. Nevertheless, where there is consumption there is pleasure, and where there is pleasure there is agency. Freedom, on the other hand, is a rather more elusive commodity.

Further, the idea of fantasy carries with it the inescapable connotation of thought divorced from projects and actions, and it also has a private, even individualistic sound about it. The imagination, on the other hand, has a projective sense about it, the sense of being a prelude to some sort of expression, whether aesthetic or otherwise. Fantasy can dissipate (because its logic is so often autotelic), but the imagination, especially when collective, can become the fuel for action. It is the imagination, in its collective forms, that creates ideas of neighborhood and nationhood, of moral economies and unjust rule, of higher wages and foreign labor prospects. The imagination is today a staging ground for action, and not only for escape.

The third distinction is between the individual and collective senses of the imagination. It is important to stress here that I am speaking of the imagination now as a property of collectives, and not merely as a faculty of the gifted individual (its tacit sense since the flowering of European Romanticism). Part of what the mass media make possible, because of the conditions of collective reading, criticism, and pleasure, is what I have elsewhere called a "community of sentiment" (Appadurai 1990), a group that begins to imagine and feel things together. As Benedict Anderson (1983) has shown so well, print capitalism can be one important way in which groups who have never been in face-to-face contact can begin to think of themselves as Indonesian or Indian or Malaysian. But other forms of electronic capitalism can have similar, and even more powerful effects, for they do not work only at the level of the nation-state. Collective experiences of the mass media, especially film and video, can create sodalities of worship and charisma, such as those that formed regionally around the Indian female deity Santoshi Ma in the seventies and eighties and transnationally around Ayatollah Khomeini in roughly the same period. Similar sodalities can form around sport and internationalism, as the transnational effects of the Olympics so clearly show. Tenements and buildings house video clubs in places like Kathmandu and Bombay. Fan clubs and political followings emerge from small-town media cultures, as in South India.

These sodalities resemble what Diana Crane (1972) has called "invisible colleges" in reference to the world of science, but they are more volatile, less professionalized, less subject to collectively shared criteria of pleasure, taste, or mutual relevance. They are communities in themselves but always potentially communities for themselves capable, of moving from shared imagination to collective action. Most important, as I will argue in the conclusion to this chapter, these sodalities are often transnational, even postnational, and they frequently operate beyond the boundaries of the nation. These mass-mediated sodalities have the additional complexity that, in them, diverse local experiences of taste, pleasure, and politics can crisscross with one another, thus creating the possibility of convergences in translocal social action that would otherwise be hard to imagine.

No single episode captures these realities better than the now mind-numbing Salman Rushdie affair, involving a banned book, a religiously mandated death sentence, and an author committed to personal voice and aesthetic freedom. *The Satanic Verses* provoked Muslims (and others) across the world to debate the politics of reading, the cultural relevance of censorship, the dignity of religion, and the freedom of some groups to judge

authors without independent knowledge of the text. The Rushdie affair is about a text-in-motion, whose commoditized trajectory brought it outside the safe haven of Western norms about artistic freedom and aesthetic rights into the space of religious rage and the authority of religious scholars in their own transnational spheres. Here, the transnational worlds of liberal aesthetics and radical Islam met head-on, in the very different settings of Bradford and Karachi, New York and New Delhi. In this episode, we can also see how global processes involving mobile texts and migrant audiences create implosive events that fold global pressures into small, already politicized arenas (see chap. 7), producing locality (chap. 9) in new, globalized ways.

This theory of a break—or rupture—with its strong emphasis on electronic mediation and mass migration, is necessarily a theory of the recent past (or the extended present) because it is only in the past two decades or so that media and migration have become so massively globalized, that is to say, active across large and irregular transnational terrains. Why do I consider this theory to be anything more than an update of older social theories of the ruptures of modernization? First, mine is not a teleological theory, with a recipe for how modernization will universally yield rationality, punctuality, democracy, the free market, and a higher gross national product. Second, the pivot of my theory is not any large-scale project of social engineering (whether organized by states, international agencies, or other technocratic elites) but is the everyday cultural practice through which the work of the imagination is transformed. Third, my approach leaves entirely open the question of where the experiments with modernity that electronic mediation enables might lead in terms of nationalism, violence, and social justice. Put another way, I am more deeply ambivalent about prognosis than any variant of classical modernization theory of which I am aware. Fourth, and most important, my approach to the break caused by the joint force of electronic mediation and mass migration is explicitly transnational—even postnational—as I suggest in the last part of this book. As such, it moves away dramatically from the architecture of classical modernization theory, which one might call fundamentally realist insofar as it assumes the salience, both methodological and ethical, of the nation-state.

We cannot simplify matters by imagining that the global is to space what the modern is to time. For many societies, modernity is an elsewhere, just as the global is a temporal wave that must be encountered in *their* present. Globalization has shrunk the distance between elites, shifted key relations between producers and consumers, broken many links between labor

and family life, obscured the lines between temporary locales and imaginary national attachments. Modernity now seems more practical and less pedagogic, more experiential and less disciplinary than in the fifties and sixties, when it was mostly experienced (especially for those outside the national elite) through the propaganda apparatuses of the newly independent nation-states and their great leaders, like Jawaharlal Nehru, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Kwame Nkrumah, and Sukarno. The megarhetoric of developmental modernization (economic growth, high technology, agribusiness, schooling, militarization) in many countries is still with us. But it is often punctuated, interrogated, and domesticated by the micronarratives of film, television, music, and other expressive forms, which allow modernity to be rewritten more as vernacular globalization and less as a concession to large-scale national and international policies. As I suggested earlier, there was something of this experiential quality for those (such as myself) born into the ruling classes of the new nations in the fifties and sixties, but for many working people and the poor, this experiential engagement with modernity is a relatively recent fact.

These subversive micronarratives also fuel oppositional movements, ranging from the Shining Path in Peru to Habitat for Humanity, from green movements in Europe to Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka, from Islamic groups in Egypt to breakaway nationalist guerrillas in Chechnya. In these movements, some of which are repressive and violent while others are democratic and peaceful, we can see that electronic mass mediation and transnational mobilization have broken the monopoly of autonomous nation-states over the project of modernization. The transformation of everyday subjectivities through electronic mediation and the work of the imagination is not only a cultural fact. It is deeply connected to politics, through the new ways in which individual attachments, interests, and aspirations increasingly crosscut those of the nation-state.

The diasporic public spheres that such encounters create are no longer small, marginal, or exceptional. They are part of the cultural dynamic of urban life in most countries and continents, in which migration and mass mediation coconstitute a new sense of the global as modern and the modern as global. Mira Nair's film *Mississippi Masala*, for example, is an epic of diaspora and race redoubled, exploring how Indians transformed and displaced by race relations in Uganda deal with the intricacies of race in the American South, all the time retaining their sense of Indianness-in-motion. The viewing of cricket matches between India and Pakistan by migrants in the Gulf states from these countries (see chap. 5) is about the peculiarities of diasporic nationalism in an emergent Indian Ocean politics. The intense battles over the English language and about immigrant rights now heating up (again) in the United States are not just one more variant on the politics of pluralism: they are about the capability of American politics to contain the diasporic politics of Mexicans in Southern California, Haitians in Miami, Colombians in New York, and Koreans in Los Angeles. Indeed, as I will propose in my concluding observations, it is the widespread appearance of various kinds of diasporic public spheres that constitute one special diacritic of the global modern.

So much for the global now. There is a here to these chapters as well. They are written in part out of an encounter between my postwar Anglophone upbringing and my encounter with the American social-science story of modernization as the theory of the true, the good, and the inevitable. They are also written from a professional perspective shaped substantially by two American research formations within which I have had the bulk of my training and in which I have spent much of my life as an academic: these are anthropology and area studies. Although this is a book about globalization, it is marked and constrained by the contests of the past two decades within both these American academic formations. Thus its epistemological anxieties are decidedly local, even if locality is no longer what it used to be (chap. 9).

The Eye of Anthropology

Anthropology is my archive of lived actualities, found in all sorts of ethnographies about peoples who have lived very different sorts of lives from my own, today and in the past. The archive of anthropology is a shadow presence in all the chapters that follow. That is not because it is inherently better than some other disciplinary archive. Indeed, critiques of this archive have been trenchant and untiring in the past fifteen years. But it is the one I best know how to read. As an archive, it also has the advantage of reminding one that every similarity hides more than one difference, and that similarities and differences conceal one another indefinitely, so that the last turtle is always a matter of methodological convenience or stamina. This archive, and the sensibility that it produces in the professional anthropologist, predisposes me strongly toward the idea that globalization is not the story of cultural homogenization. This latter argument is the very least that I would want the reader to take away from this book. But anthropology brings with it a professional tendency to privilege the cultural as the key diacritic in many practices (that to others might appear simply human, or stupid, or calculating, or patriotic, or something else). Because

this book claims to be about the *cultural* dimensions of globalization, let me spell out the special force that this adjective carries in my usage.

I find myself frequently troubled by the word *culture* as a noun but centrally attached to the adjectival form of the word, that is, *cultural*. When I reflect on why this is so, I realize that much of the problem with the noun form has to do with its implication that culture is some kind of object, thing, or substance, whether physical or metaphysical. This substantialization seems to bring culture back into the discursive space of race, the very idea it was originally designed to combat. Implying a mental substance, the noun *culture* appears to privilege the sort of sharing, agreeing, and bounding that fly in the face of the facts of unequal knowledge and the differential prestige of lifestyles, and to discourage attention to the worldviews and agency of those who are marginalized or dominated. Viewed as a physical substance, culture begins to smack of any variety of biologisms, including race, which we have certainly outgrown as scientific categories. Alfred Kroeber's term *superorganic* nicely captures both sides of this substantialism, something with which I am not in sympathy. The efforts of the past few decades, notably in American anthropology, to escape this trap by looking at culture largely as a linguistic form (understood mainly in Saussurean structuralist terms) only partly avoids the dangers of such substantialism.

If *culture* as a noun seems to carry associations with some sort of substance in ways that appear to conceal more than they reveal, *cultural* the adjective moves one into a realm of differences, contrasts, and comparisons that is more helpful. This adjectival sense of culture, which builds on the context-sensitive, contrast-centered heart of Saussurean linguistics, seems to me one of the virtues of structuralism that we have tended to forget in our haste to attack it for its ahistorical, formal, binary, mentalist, and textualist associations.

The most valuable feature of the concept of culture is the concept of difference, a contrastive rather than a substantive property of certain things. Although the term *difference* has now taken on a vast set of associations (principally because of the special use of the term by Jacques Derrida and his followers), its main virtue is that it is a useful heuristic that can highlight points of similarity and contrast between all sorts of categories: classes, genders, roles, groups, and nations. When we therefore point to a practice, a distinction, a conception, an object, or an ideology as having a cultural dimension (notice the adjectival use), we stress the idea of situated difference, that is, difference in relation to something local, embodied, and significant. This point can be summarized in the following form: culture is

not usefully regarded as a substance but is better regarded as a dimension of phenomena, a dimension that attends to situated and embodied difference. Stressing the dimensionality of culture rather than its substantiality permits our thinking of culture less as a property of individuals and groups and more as a heuristic device that we can use to talk about difference.

But there are many kinds of differences in the world and only some of these are cultural. And here I bring in a second component of my proposal about the adjectival form of the word *culture*. I suggest that we regard as cultural only those differences that either express, or set the groundwork for, the mobilization of group identities. This qualification provides a brute principle of selection that focuses us on a variety of differences having to do with group identity, both within and outside any particular social group. In putting the mobilization of group identities at the heart of the adjective *cultural*, I have in fact made a move that looks, at first glance, retrogressive, as it appears that I am beginning to bring the word *culture* uncomfortably close to the idea of ethnicity. And that gets me into some new problems that need to be unraveled.

Before I try to do the unraveling, which will allow me to move toward the idea of culturalism, let me review where we have been. Resisting ideas of culture that tempt us to think of actual social groups as cultures, I have also resisted the noun form *culture* and suggested an adjectival approach to culture, which stresses its contextual, heuristic, and comparative dimensions and orients us to the idea of culture as difference, especially difference in the realm of group identity. I have therefore suggested that culture is a pervasive dimension of human discourse that exploits difference to generate diverse conceptions of group identity.

Having veered so close to the idea of ethnicity—the idea of naturalized group identity—it is important to be clear about the relation between culture and group identity that I seek to articulate. Culture, unmarked, can continue to be used to refer to the plethora of differences that characterize the world today, differences at various levels, with various valences, and with greater and lesser degrees of social consequence. I propose, however, that we restrict the term *culture* as a marked term to the subset of these differences that has been mobilized to articulate the boundary of difference. As a boundary-maintenance question, culture then becomes a matter of group identity as constituted by some differences among others.

But is this not a way of simply equating ethnicity and culture? Yes and no. Yes, because in this usage *culture* would not stress simply the possession of certain attributes (material, linguistic, or territorial) but the consciousness of these attributes and their naturalization as essential to group iden-

tity (see chap. 7). That is, rather than falling prey to the assumption, at least as old as Weber, that ethnicity rests on some sort of extension of the primordial idea of kinship (which is in turn biological and genealogical), the idea of ethnicity I propose takes the conscious and imaginative construction and mobilization of differences as its core. Culture 1, constituting a virtually open-ended archive of differences is consciously shaped into Culture 2, that subset of these differences that constitutes the diacritics of group identity.

But this process of mobilizing certain differences and linking them to group identity is also unlike ethnicity, at least in an older understanding, because it does not depend on the extension of primordial sentiments to larger and larger units in some sort of unidirectional process, nor does it make the mistake of supposing that larger social units simply draw on the sentiments of family and kinship to give emotional force to large-scale group identities. Thus, in chapter 5 I show that far from drawing on the existing repertoire of emotions and moving them into a larger arena, Indian cricket is a large-scale form that comes to be inscribed on the body through a variety of practices of increasingly smaller scale. This logic is just the reverse of the old primordialist (or extensionist) idea of ethnic identity.

The idea of culture as involving the naturalized organization of certain differences in the interests of group identity, through and in the historical process, and through and in the tensions between agents and structures, comes closer to what has been called the instrumental conception of ethnicity, as opposed to the primordial one. I have two qualifications about this convergence, qualifications that lead to my discussion of culturalism. One is that the ends to which instrumental conceptions of ethnic identity are formed may themselves be counterstructural responses to existing valorizations of difference: they may thus be value-rational rather than instrumental-rational, in Weber's sense. They may have a purely identity-oriented instrumentality rather than an instrumentality that, as is so often implied, is extracultural (economic or political or emotional). Put another way, the mobilization of markers of group difference may itself be part of a contestation of values *about* difference, as distinct from the consequences of difference for wealth, security, or power. My second qualification about most instrumental accounts is that they do not explain the process by which certain criteria of difference, mobilized for group identity (in turn instrumental to other goals) are (re)inscribed into bodily subjects, thus to be experienced as both natural and profoundly incendiary at the same time.

We have now moved one step further, from culture as substance to culture as the dimension of difference, to culture as group identity based on difference, to culture as the process of naturalizing a subset of differences that have been mobilized to articulate group identity. We are at this point in a position to move to the question of culturalism.

We rarely encounter the word *culturalism* by itself: it is usually hitched as a noun to certain prefixes like *bi, multi,* and *inter,* to name the most prominent. But it may be useful to begin to use *culturalism* to designate a feature of movements involving identities consciously in the making. These movements, whether in the United States or elsewhere, are usually directed at modern nation-states, which distribute various entitlements, sometimes including life and death, in accordance with classifications and policies regarding group identity. Throughout the world, faced with the activities of states that are concerned with encompassing their ethnic diversities into fixed and closed sets of cultural categories to which individuals are often assigned forcibly, many groups are consciously mobilizing themselves according to identitarian criteria. Culturalism, put simply, is identity politics mobilized at the level of the nation-state.

This sort of culturalism is my principal focus in chapter 7, where I mount a sustained critique of the primordialist view of the ethnic violence of the past decade. What appears to be a worldwide rebirth of ethnic nationalisms and separatisms is not really what journalists and pundits all too frequently refer to as "tribalism," implying old histories, local rivalries, and deep hatreds. Rather, the ethnic violence we see in many places is part of a wider transformation that is suggested by the term *culturalism*. Culturalism, as I have already suggested, is the conscious mobilization of cultural differences in the service of a larger national or transnational politics. It is frequently associated with extraterritorial histories and memories, sometimes with refugee status and exile, and almost always with struggles for stronger recognition from existing nation-states or from various transnational bodies.

Culturalist movements (for they are almost always efforts to mobilize) are the most general form of the work of the imagination and draw frequently on the fact or possibility of migration or secession. Most important, they are self-conscious about identity, culture, and heritage, all of which tend to be part of the deliberate vocabulary of culturalist movements as they struggle with states and other culturalist focuses and groups. It is this deliberate, strategic, and populist mobilization of cultural material that justifies calling such movements culturalist, though they may vary in many ways. Culturalist movements, whether they involve African-Americans, Pakistanis in Britain, Algerians in France, native Hawaiians, Sikhs, or French

speakers in Canada, tend to be counternational and metacultural. In the broadest sense, as I shall suggest in the last part of this book, culturalism is the form that cultural differences tend to take in the era of mass mediation, migration, and globalization.

How Areas Get Studied

The anthropological stress on the cultural, which is the main inflection I wish to give to the debate on globalization, is in my case further sustained by my training and practice as a scholar of area studies, specifically of South Asian studies in the United States. There has not yet been a sustained critical analysis of the link, in the United States, between the emergence of the idea of culture areas in anthropology between the World Wars and the full-fledged formation after World War II of area studies as the major way to look at the strategically significant parts of the developing world. Yet there is little doubt that both perspectives incline one to a particular sort of map in which groups and their ways of life are marked by differences of culture, and in the area-studies formation these differences slide into a topography of national cultural differences. Thus geographical divisions, cultural differences, and national boundaries tended to become isomorphic, and there grew a strong tendency to refract world processes through this sort of national-cultural map of the world. Area studies adds to this spatial imaginary a strong, if sometimes tacit, sense of the strategic importance of information gained in this perspective. This is the reason for the often noted links between the Cold War, government funding, and university expansion in the organization of area-studies centers after World War II. Nevertheless, area studies has provided the major counterpoint to the delusions of the view from nowhere that underwrites much canonical social science. It is this aspect of my training that compelled me to situate my genealogy of the global present in the area I know best: India.

There is a special anxiety that now surrounds the structures and ideologies of area studies in the United States. Recognizing that area studies is somehow deeply tied up with a strategizing world picture driven by U.S. foreign-policy needs between 1945 and 1989, leading figures in the world of universities, foundations, think tanks, and even the government have made it clear that the old way of doing area studies does not make sense in the world after 1989. Thus left-wing critics of area studies, much influenced by the important work of Edward Said on orientalism, have been joined by free-marketeers and advocates of liberalization, who are impatient with what they deride as the narrowness and history fetish of area-studies experts. Area-studies scholars are widely criticized as obstacles to the study of everything from comparison and contemporaneity to civil society and free markets. Of course, no critique that is so sweeping and so sudden could be entirely fair, and the odd mix of its critics suggests that area-studies scholarship might be taking the rap for a wider failure in the U.S. academy to deliver a broader and more prescient picture of the world after 1989.

The area-studies tradition is a double-edged sword. In a society notoriously devoted to exceptionalism, and to endless preoccupation with "America," this tradition has been a tiny refuge for the serious study of foreign languages, alternative worldviews, and large-scale perspectives on sociocultural change outside Europe and the United States. Bedeviled by a certain tendency toward philology (in the narrow, lexical sense) and a certain overidentification with the regions of its specialization, area studies has nonetheless been one of the few serious counterweights to the tireless tendency to marginalize huge parts of the world in the American academy and in American society more generally. Yet the area-studies tradition has probably grown too comfortable with its own maps of the world, too secure in its own expert practices, and too insensitive to transnational processes both today and in the past. So criticism and reform are certainly in order, but how can area studies help to improve the way that world pictures are generated in the United States?

From the perspective advanced here and in the rest of this book, area studies is a salutary reminder that globalization is itself a deeply historical, uneven, and even *localizing* process. Globalization does not necessarily or even frequently imply homogenization or Americanization, and to the extent that different societies appropriate the materials of modernity differently, there is still ample room for the deep study of specific geographies, histories, and languages. What I discuss in chapters 3 and 4 as the relationship between history and genealogy is impossible to engage without a strong sense of the actualities of the *longue durée*, which always produce specific geographies, both real and imagined. If the genealogy of cultural forms is about their circulation across regions, the history of these forms is about their ongoing domestication into local practice. The very interaction of historical and genealogical forms is uneven, diverse, and contingent. In this sense, history, the ruthless discipline of context (in E. P. Thompson's colorful phrase), is everything. But this recognition is not a warrant for knee-jerk localism of the sort sometimes associated with area studies. In any case, area studies is a specific Western technique of re-

search and can hardly pretend to be a simple mirror of the civilizational Other. What does need to be recognized, if the area-studies tradition is to be revitalized, is that locality itself is a historical product and that the histories through which localities emerge are eventually subject to the dynamics of the global. This argument, which culminates in a reminder that there is nothing mere about the local, is the burden of the final chapter of this book.

This mixed review of area studies, a tradition in which I have been immersed for the past twenty-five years, underlies the presence at the center of this book of two chapters about India. These chapters, on the census and on cricket, are a counterpoint to those that might otherwise seem, well, too global. But I hasten to plead that India—in this book—is not to be read as a mere case, example, or instance of something larger than itself. It is, rather a *site* for the examination of how locality emerges in a globalizing world, of how colonial processes underwrite contemporary politics, of how history and genealogy inflect one another, and of how global facts take local form.[2] In this sense these chapters—and the frequent invocations of India throughout the book—are not about India (taken as a natural fact) but about the processes through which contemporary India has emerged. I am aware of the irony (even the contradiction) in having a nation-state be the anchoring referent of a book devoted to globalization and animated by a sense of the end of the era of the nation-state. But here my expertise and my limitations are two sides of the same coin, and I urge the reader to see India as an optic, and not as a reified social fact or a crude nationalist reflex.

I make this detour in recognition of the fact that any book about globalization is a mild exercise in megalomania, especially when it is produced in the relatively privileged circumstances of the American research university. It seems important to identify the knowledge forms through which any such megalomania comes to articulate itself. In my case, these forms—anthropology and area studies—predispose me by habit to the fixing of practices, spaces, and countries into a map of static differences. This is, counterintuitively, a danger even in a book such as this, which is consciously shaped by a concern with diaspora, deterritorialization, and the irregularity of the ties between nations, ideologies, and social movements.

Social Science after Patriotism

The final part of the here and now is a fact about the modern world that has exercised some of the best contemporary thinkers in the social and

human sciences: it is the issue of the nation-state, its history, its current crisis, its prospects. I did not begin to write this book with the crisis of the nation-state as my principal concern. But in the six years over which its chapters were written, I have come to be convinced that the nation-state, as a complex modern political form, is on its last legs. The evidence is by no means clear, and the returns are hardly all in. I am aware that all nation-states are not the same in respect to the national imaginary, the apparatuses of the state, or the sturdiness of the hyphen between them. Yet there is some justification for what might sometimes seem like a reified view of *the* nation-state in this book. Nation-states, for all their important differences (and only a fool would conflate Sri Lanka with Great Britain), make sense only as parts of a system. This system (even when seen as a system of differences) appears poorly equipped to deal with the interlinked diasporas of people and images that mark the here and now. Nation-states, as units in a complex interactive system, are not very likely to be the long-term arbiters of the relationship between globality and modernity. That is why, in my title, I imply that modernity is at large.

The idea that some nation-states are in crisis is a staple of the field of comparative politics and was in some sense the justification for much of modernization theory, especially in the sixties. The idea that some states are weak, sick, corrupt, or soft has been around for several decades (remember Gunnar Myrdahl?). More recently, it has become widely acceptable to see nationalism as a disease, especially when it is somebody else's nationalism. The idea that all nation-states are to some extent bedeviled by globalized movements of arms, moneys, diseases, and ideologies is also hardly news in the era of the multinational corporation. But the idea that the very system of nation-states is in jeopardy is hardly popular. In this book, my persistent focus on the hyphen that links nation to state is part of an evolving argument that the very epoch of the nation-state is near its end. This view, which lies somewhere between a diagnosis and a prognosis, between an intuition and an argument, needs to be spelled out.

First, I need to distinguish between the ethical and the analytic components of my argument. On the ethical front, I am increasingly inclined to see most modern governmental apparatuses as inclined to self-perpetuation, bloat, violence, and corruption. Here, I am in mixed company, from the left and from the right. The ethical question I am often faced with is, if the nation-state disappears, what mechanism will assure the protection of minorities, the minimal distribution of democratic rights, and the reasonable possibility of the growth of civil society? My answer is that I do not know, but this admission is hardly an ethical recommendation for a system that

seems plagued by endemic disease. As to alternative social forms and possibilities, there are actually existing social forms and arrangements that might contain the seeds of more dispersed and diverse forms of transnational allegiance and affiliation. This is part of the argument of chapter 8, although I readily admit that the road from various transnational movements to sustainable forms of transnational governance is hardly clear. I prefer, however, the exercise of looking for—indeed, imagining—these alternative possibilities to the strategy of defining some nation-states as healthier than others and then suggesting various mechanisms of ideology transfer. This latter strategy replays modernization-cum-development policy all over again, with the same triumphalist underpinnings and the same unhealthy prospects.

If the ethical front of my argument is necessarily fuzzy, the analytic front is somewhat sharper. Even a cursory inspection of the relationships within and among the more than 150 nation-states that are now members of the United Nations shows that border wars, culture wars, runaway inflation, massive immigrant populations, or serious flights of capital threaten sovereignty in many of them. Even where state sovereignty is apparently intact, state legitimacy is frequently insecure. Even in nation-states as apparently secure as the United States, Japan, and Germany, debates about race and rights, membership and loyalty, citizenship and authority are no longer culturally peripheral. While one argument for the longevity of the nation-state form is based on these apparently secure and legitimate instances, the other argument is an inverse one and bases itself on the new ethnonationalisms of the world, notably those of Eastern Europe. Bosnia-Herzegovina is almost always pointed to in the United States as *the* principal symptom of the fact that nationalism is alive and sick, while the rich democracies are simultaneously invoked to show that the nation-state is alive and well.

Given the frequency with which Eastern Europe is used to show that tribalism is deeply human, that other people's nationalism is tribalism writ large, and that territorial sovereignty is still the major goal of many large ethnic groups, let me propose an alternative interpretation. In my judgment, Eastern Europe has been singularly distorted in popular arguments about nationalism in the press and in the academy in the United States. Rather than being the modal instance of the complexities of all contemporary ethnonationalisms, Eastern Europe, and its Serbian face in particular, has been used as a demonstration of the continued vigor of nationalisms in which land, language, religion, history, and blood are congruent, a textbook case of what nationalism is all about. Of course, what is fascinating

about Eastern Europe is that some of its own right-wing ideologues have convinced the liberal Western press that nationalism *is* a politics of primordia, whereas the real question is how it has been made to *appear* that way. This certainly makes Eastern Europe a fascinating and urgent case from many points of view, including the fact that we need to be skeptical when experts claim to have encountered ideal types in actual cases.

In most cases of counternationalism, secession, supranationalism, or ethnic revival on a large scale, the common thread is self-determination rather than territorial sovereignty as such. Even in those cases where territory seems to be a fundamental issue, such as in Palestine, it could be argued that debates about land and territory are in fact functional spin-offs of arguments that are substantially about power, justice, and self-determination. In a world of people on the move, of global commoditization and states incapable of delivering basic rights even to their majority ethnic populations (see chap. 2), territorial sovereignty is an increasingly difficult justification for those nation-states that are increasingly dependent on foreign labor, expertise, arms, or soldiers. For counternationalist movements, territorial sovereignty is a plausible idiom for their aspirations, but it should not be mistaken for their founding logic or their ultimate concern. To do so is to commit what I would call the Bosnia Fallacy, an error that involves (a) misunderstanding Eastern European ethnic battles as tribalist and primordial, an error in which the *New York Times* is the leader, and (b) compounding the mistake by taking the Eastern European case to be the modal case of all emergent nationalisms. To move away from the Bosnia Fallacy requires two difficult concessions: first, that the political systems of the wealthy northern nations may themselves be in crisis, and second, that the emergent nationalisms of many parts of the world may be founded on patriotisms that are not either exclusively or fundamentally territorial. Arguments for making these concessions animate many of the chapters in this book. In making them, I have not always found it easy to maintain the distinction between the analytic and the ethical perspectives on the future of the nation-state, although I have tried to do so.

As the nation-state enters a terminal crisis (if my prognostications prove to be correct), we can certainly expect that the materials for a postnational imaginary must be around us already. Here, I think we need to pay special attention to the relation between mass mediation and migration, the two facts that underpin my sense of the cultural politics of the global modern. In particular, we need to look closely at the variety of what have emerged as *diasporic public spheres*. Benedict Anderson did us a service in identifying the way in which certain forms of mass mediation, notably

those involving newspapers, novels, and other print media, played a key role in imagining the nation and in facilitating the spread of this form to the colonial world in Asia and elsewhere. My general argument is that there is a similar link to be found between the work of the imagination and the emergence of a postnational political world. Without the benefit of hindsight (which we do have with respect to the global journey of the idea of the nation), it is hard to make a clear case for the role of the imagination in a postnational order. But as mass mediation becomes increasingly dominated by electronic media (and thus delinked from the capacity to read and write), and as such media increasingly link producers and audiences across national boundaries, and as these audiences themselves start new conversations between those who move and those who stay, we find a growing number of diasporic public spheres.

These diasporic spheres are frequently tied up with students and other intellectuals engaging in long-distance nationalism (as with activists from the People's Republic of China). The establishment of black majority rule in South Africa opens up new kinds of discourse of racial democracy in Africa as well as in the United States and the Caribbean. The Islamic world is the most familiar example of a whole range of debates and projects that have little to do with national boundaries. Religions that were in the past resolutely national now pursue global missions and diasporic clienteles with vigor: the global Hinduism of the past decade is the single best example of this process. Activist movements involved with the environment, women's issues, and human rights generally have created a sphere of transnational discourse, frequently resting on the moral authority of refugees, exiles, and other displaced persons. Major transnational separatist movements like the Sikhs, the Kurds, and the Sri Lankan Tamils conduct their self-imagining in sites throughout the world, where they have enough members to allow for the emergence of multiple nodes in a larger diasporic public sphere.

The wave of debates about multiculturalism that has spread through the United States and Europe is surely testimony to the incapacity of states to prevent their minority populations from linking themselves to wider constituencies of religious or ethnic affiliation. These examples, and others, suggest that the era in which we could assume that viable public spheres were typically, exclusively, or necessarily national could be at an end.

Diasporic public spheres, diverse among themselves, are the crucibles of a postnational political order. The engines of their discourse are mass media (both interactive and expressive) and the movement of refugees, activists, students, and laborers. It may well be that the emergent postnational order proves not to be a system of homogeneous units (as with the current system of nation-states) but a system based on relations between heterogeneous units (some social movements, some interest groups, some professional bodies, some nongovernmental organizations, some armed constabularies, some judicial bodies). The challenge for this emergent order will be whether such heterogeneity is consistent with some minimal conventions of norm and value, which do not require a strict adherence to the liberal social contract of the modern West. This fateful question will be answered not by academic fiat but by the negotiations (both civil and violent) between the worlds imagined by these different interests and movements. In the short run, as we can see already, it is likely to be a world of increased incivility and violence. In the longer run, free of the constraints of the nation form, we may find that cultural freedom and sustainable justice in the world do not presuppose the uniform and general existence of the nation-state. This unsettling possibility could be the most exciting dividend of living in modernity at large.